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C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 000016

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/06/2019  
TAGS: [PGIV](#) [KPLS](#) [KDEM](#) [ES](#)  
SUBJECT: EL SALVADOR ELECTION UPDATE: JANUARY 6

Classified By: The Ambassador for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[¶1.](#) (U) Summary: This is an update regarding the Salvadoran municipal and legislative elections scheduled for January 18, and the presidential elections scheduled for March 15. This report includes results of the two latest polls and details on recent reports of electoral violence.

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THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE  
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[¶2.](#) (U) Polling released by the Information and Public Opinion Center of the Technological University (CIOPS) December 28 showed that (left-wing) FMLN presidential candidate Mauricio Funes (45.9) leads (pro-U.S., right-wing) ARENA candidate Rodrigo Avila (28.6) by 17.3 percent, an increase of 2.8 points since October. A poll of likely voters taken by the International Republican Institutes in early December shows Funes (39) leading Avila (27) by 12 points.

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SAN SALVADOR AND SANTA ANA  
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[¶3.](#) (U) Leading (center-right) newspaper La Prensa Grafica released polling results January 3 that show incumbent Mayor Violeta Menjivar (FMLN) (32.3) leads ARENA candidate Norman Quijano (27.6) by 4.7 points. However, results indicate that respondents believe Quijano (40.4) to be more capable than Menjivar (33.6).

[¶4.](#) (U) The poll also showed incumbent (pro-U.S., center-right) Christian Democratic Party (PDC) mayor Orlando Mena (18.5) tied with FMLN candidate Francisco Lemus (19.0) in Santa Ana.

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ELECTORAL VIOLENCE  
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[¶5.](#) (U) Media reported that ARENA and FMLN sympathizers scuffled in El Progreso, located in the municipality of Santo Tomas, January 3. Two National Civilian Police (PNC) agents were injured, as well as one ARENA sympathizer. The scuffle began after ARENA sympathizers painted walls and placed campaign posters in the area.

[¶6.](#) (U) Approximately 15 residents of El Progreso, linked to the FMLN student association & Popular Youth Block8, armed with sticks and stones tried to prevent ARENA followers from placing electoral propaganda. Six additional PNC patrols were called to assist the injured officers. Other electoral violence was reported in Cuscatancingo and La Union. The Catholic Church and the Chamber of Commerce urged political leaders to end the violence.

[¶7.](#) (C) FMLN spokesman and Legislative Assembly Deputy

Sigfrido Reyes sought out PolCouns December 4 to tell him the FMLN was concerned this recent spate of violence would continue and believed it was being instigated by ARENA. The FMLN, he said, has no interest or potential gain in violence.

Reyes said he had just been told by &credible sources<sup>8</sup> that groups supporting ARENA were planning a staged attack on an ARENA mayoral candidate, probably San Salvador candidate Norman Quijano. Reyes said the aim was probably to frighten off timid voters and increase support for Quijano through sympathy.

18. (C) Comment: While we are unable to corroborate Reyes, allegations, they are indicative of increasingly tense pre-election climate in El Salvador, where rumor and fact are becoming increasingly difficult to disentangle.

GLAZER